

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel claims 3 and 4 without prejudice.

Please amend claims 1, 6 and 7 pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.121 as follows (see the accompanying "marked up" version pursuant to 1.121).

F1  
1. (Five Times Amended) A water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen which comprises a thickener which is associative and swells in an alkaline medium, said thickener comprising a polymer having a carboxyl group and a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of a linear hydrocarbon, a halogenated alkyl, an organosilicon group, and a fluorinated carbon group, a pigment whose particles are subjected to surface treatment with a water soluble polymer and a surfactant, a polar solvent comprising water and other water-miscible solvents and a pH controlling agent.

P2  
6. (Twice Amended) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen of claim 1 wherein the hydrophobic group is a linear hydrocarbon.

P3  
7. (Amended) The water based ink composition for a ballpoint pen of claim 1 wherein the hydrophobic group is a halogenated alkyl.